



The Montessori

# OBSERVER

Prejudice

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Children working at The Children's Place in Katy, Texas

## The Children's Place in Katy, Texas

The Children's Place is a Montessori school in Katy, Texas under the ownership and management of the Crockett family. Mr. and Mrs. **W.E. Crockett**, their son George and wife Judy are the school's corporation directors.

**Judy Crockett**, director of this Society member school, has served in such a capacity since the school's founding in 1976. Her extensive educational background includes a considerable teaching and training experience in Montessori education since 1970. Ms. Crockett emphasizes a school policy of "continued improvement of the staff training and our facilities". She states that "It is our policy to keep abreast of worthwhile developments that can help us".

The Children's Place is licensed for 110 children and usually has an average of 60 children in the primary (2-6) educational program. **George Crockett**, Judy's husband, is a physical education teacher in the local school district who assists at the Crockett school after his school day is completed. During the summer, George Crockett is the school's physical education director and conducts many of the school activities.

The school program features many field trips in the summer, special shows and activities conducted by the children and

Con'd. on Page 4, Col. 2

## Society Takes Second Appeal

On January 2, 1985, the International Montessori Society filed its second appeal to the Fourth Circuit Federal Court of Appeals (Richmond, Virginia) in its continuing legal action to free private education from alleged unwarranted and unreasonable impositions of various laws and regulations in the state of Maryland. Such appeal specifically challenges the lower federal court's summary dismissal of the case in Baltimore, Maryland on December 18, 1984.

The Society's case asserts that laws in Maryland over private education are unconstitutional in that they have unreasonably deterred and prohibited the Society's establishment and operation of Montessori teacher training in the state. The case's first appeal in 1982 resulted in a remand to the lower court to "allow the case to proceed." Costs on this first appeal were also awarded by the Fourth Circuit to the Society over the objection and argument of the state party defendants.

The current appeal opposes the most recent lower court's ruling that Maryland's policy to subjectively review and approve a private teacher training school's academic curriculum prior to its operation is a permissible form of state government control over private education. Notably such ruling asserted that similar state certification of curriculum would likewise be permissible in the control of religious private schools in the state. However, since Maryland laws presently exempt religious schools from the certification requirements imposed on other private schools, the discriminatory exemption in this regard was considered sort of "immaterial" to the Society's basic claim and prayer for remedy in the present case. Specifically, the court held that "the effect of declaring the exemption unconstitutional would be that educational institutions operated by bona fide church organizations would be subject to state certification."

The Society's appeal will specifically challenge the lower court's ruling as legally in error under the United States Constitution; i.e., a decision which would, in effect, condone a state government's blatant academic content censorship of all private schools under the guise of "regulation" and the 'public welfare.' Such appeal essentially seeks a partial summary judgment in favor of the Society so that its

teacher training operation can proceed in Maryland, unmoled by detrimental government interference in such operation. If completely successful on appeal, the question of monetary damages for the state's abusive practices against the Society since 1980 will thereafter proceed to final disposition through customary trial proceedings in the lower court.

In a related issue in the case, the Clerk of the Federal District Court recently held that additional costs be allowed to the Society in the amount of \$419.00 emanating from the Society's prior successful appeal in the case. On February 11, 1985, the Clerk assessed such additional \$419.00 amount in costs against the state party defendants who had erroneously argued a lack of liability for such costs since the Society's motion in this regard was filed in the lower court on September 12, 1983.

## Legal Action in New York

**Bernard Sherwin**, President of **Unified Private Schools** (Massapequa, New York) reports that pretrial hearings are now underway in their legal action challenging jurisdiction of the Department of Social Services and its right to regulate Montessori schools in New York.

Mr. Sherwin and other Montessori school owners in New York consider the regulations of the Department of Social Services detrimental to their effective operation consistent with a complete commitment to Montessori principles. He states that "... we are not in receipt of public funds and as a result the Department of Social Services has no jurisdiction over us". In opposition, the Department of Social Services claims that if children are kept more than three hours per day, they are Day Care Centers, despite their own characterization as a "school" for young children.

The **Unified Private Schools** is seeking contributions to sustain their legal action which potentially affects all Montessori schools in New York. Send contributions and inquiries to: Gladys Kerr, Treas., Unified Private Schools, 58 Fitchburg Ave., Bay Shore, New York 11706 or call (516) 541-6365.

# Prejudice

by Lee Havis

*"Montessori Method . . . For the word 'method', we should substitute something like this: 'means offered to deliver the human personality from the oppression of age-old prejudices regarding education.'"*

Maria Montessori

from *The Formation of Man*, p. 8

Dr. Montessori's "method" is evidently a work of freeing oneself from certain deeply engrained "prejudices"; i.e., those various assumptions and pre-conceived notions about the "child" and its "education" which are inconsistent with the spontaneous emergence of the child's true "normalized" nature. Such "prejudices" tend to reflect a view of the child according to its commonly appearing external behavior in society rather than as that which spontaneously emerges of itself in the present moment as an "unknown entity".

## The Unknown Entity

*"The results we have touched upon are not so easy to obtain because enormous obstacles are encountered in century-old prejudices . . . These prejudices are so universal that it is difficult to have them recognized as such. They are confused and strengthened by the evidence of facts, because all, or nearly all, see the child as he is commonly known, not the child as he is, still as unknown entity."*

Maria Montessori

from *The Formation of Man*, p. 60-61

The adult's view of the child is typically that of its superficial appearance as commonly recognized in society; i.e., misbehaving, disobedient, inattentive, capricious and generally "empty". The "reality" of such superficial behavior tends to so dominate one's conscious awareness that the possibility of the child as an "unknown entity" is virtually completely disregarded. Indeed, the "reality" of a "normalized" true nature within the child, completely inconsistent with the well-known outer behavior of the typical child, is ordinarily dismissed as quite "impossible".

## The Impossible Reality

*" . . . the child is a great worker . . . who can learn by himself, teach himself and who possesses discipline within himself . . . No attention is paid to this reality . . . It is simply impossible; It cannot exist."*

Maria Montessori

from *The Formation of Man*, p. 66

The reality of the "normalized" child defies the widespread conventional prejudices about the child and therefore receives little, if any, attention or interest in the ordinary course of events. "Scientific" study of the child likewise tends merely to concentrate on superficial behavioral effects without ever seriously challenging any of the prejudicial underlying assumptions as to the child's essential nature.

## Science

*"modern branches of science . . . have developed around the most superficial manifestations of child behavior (actually around the 'effects' of outer circumstances) and these reached an easy compromise with those prejudices which every adult cherishes regarding the child."*

Maria Montessori

from *The Formation of Man*, p. 61

The field of modern "science" as related to childhood is likewise bound up within the same basic prejudicial view of the child as is generally popular in society. Even the term "Montessori" has come to be associated only with certain external "effects" and a rather superficial assortment of materials, rationale, academic subject matter and vague, incomplete conceptions about the nature of the child. The assumed "truth" of the child thus reflects a "reality" whose acceptance is essentially based on nothing more than popular opinion and widespread agreement in society.

## Society's "Truth"

*"The solidarity of adult society . . . assumes the power of suggestion and the appearance of an absolute truth on which all agree."*

Maria Montessori

from *The Formation of Man*, p. 69

Society's "truth" concerning the child is that which most compellingly reflects the extent of one's attachment to prejudicial assumptions regarding the child. The fundamental illusion of external appearances and behavior upon which such "truth" is based is generally not recognized as such in one's impatient urge to "teach" and otherwise meet certain presumed "needs" for the child's development.

## Illusion

*"To be contented with the imaginary, and to live as if what we imagine actually exists; to run after illusion, and 'not to recognize' reality, is a thing so common that scarcely is it apprehended. . ."*

Maria Montessori

from *Spontaneous Activity in Education*, p. 265

Typically, the adult never seriously questions the illusory nature of that which one has unwittingly created in outer circumstances. The underlying truth of one's sourceful creation of all "reality" lies buried deeply within the unconscious and is only occasionally brought to consciousness in moments of tension and discomfort. Rarely does one recognize the origins of one's own "reality" as that which emerges in the formation of "personality" from one's personal early childhood experiences with parents and teachers.

## Source of Reality

*"A child under six years of age has a 'mental form' different from that which develops after he has reached the age of six or seven . . . things absorbed during the unconscious period . . . are those which persist in such a stable manner that they are identified with the person."*

Maria Montessori

from *Discovery of the Child*, p. 324

True "reality"—i.e., one's present state of conscious awareness and being—is readily confused with that illusory "reality" which first emerged in stable form during one's own early childhood years in the form of "personality"; i.e., the outer appearance and thought patterns with which one's "self" is intimately identified throughout life. Such "personality" comes to reflect a pattern of expression and prejudicial interaction with others which essentially mirrors the prejudicial impositions of one's own parents during the early childhood years.

Cont'd. on Page 3, Col. 2

Look for the

# March Observer

featuring

# Society

The Montessori Observer

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Lee Havis, Executive Director

The *Montessori Observer* is mailed eight times each year to IMS members throughout the world. The *Observer* is sent during the following months: Jan., Feb., March, April, May, Sept., Oct., and Nov. The purpose of this publication is to provide news and information about the development of Montessori education to extend awareness of Montessori principles and promote harmony within the Montessori community.

INTERNATIONAL MONTESSORI SOCIETY  
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LETTERS TO IMS

January 4, 1985

Dear Lee,

Thank you for all your help and materials sent. I'm happy for all the information—you have sent more materials in a few months than American Montessori had in twenty years. I am so impressed I have cancelled membership with them and will continue with you. May Gold bless you.

Sr. Rosalba Masi, M.P.B.  
Mother Superior  
Villa Fusco Monessori  
Niskayuna, New York

February 8, 1975

Dear Mr. Havis,

We recently received your January **Montessori News** and have enjoyed it—as usual. . .

I am now president of **M.I.A. (Montessori Institute of America)** and one of our goals this year is to help bring a unity to Montessorians of all organizations. . .

In an effort to promote an understanding, we would like to work with you in your effort to encourage Montessorians to pull together. . .

We each have room to grow and expand and just as we encourage the children to learn from each other, I would like to see us work together and learn together! . . .

Thank you for your patience and your love of Montessori.

Sincerely,

Alita Jones  
Columbia, Missouri

January 9, 1985

Dear Mr. Havis,

We would be delighted to have regular exchange of publications with you and thank you for sending your latest "Observer".

I am sending you a copy of our latest *Newsletter and Family Life*, which was published at the end of last year and I hope these are of interest to you.

Yours Sincerely,

John Bremer, Executive Director  
Association Montessori Internationale (AMI)  
(United States of America)  
Houston, Texas

February 2, 1985

Dear Sir:

I have worked in establishing Montessori classrooms, but have never seen even 20 children who could work without direction, "application" to the academic materials, or behavior problems. . .

I am looking for "meaty" practical information on these areas, not more general philosophy. Montessori books, Montessori organizations and their quarterlies, and even St. Nicholas' course are full of non-specifics. I think most schools have misinterpreted Montessori and rely too much on pushing the child to read, know numbers, and be academically developed in other areas. . . I experience the same frustration teaching in this kind of Montessori environment that I do when I'm in a traditional preschool setting. Does your course speak in a practical way to these issues?

Sincerely,

Kathy Traugher  
Asheville, North Carolina

**Ed. Note:** Participants of the Society's independent study course do indeed report many impressive "practical" results with children, including a significantly expanded self-confidence in managing misbehavior without the imposition of force, fear or manipulation. The mastery of Montessori teaching that emerges from the course assures the child's "normalization" which invariably ends all "frustration" in one's work and association with children.

Cont'd. on Page 4, Col. 3

## Prejudice

Cont'd from Page 2, Col. 3

### Pattern of an Adult

"...the pattern of an adult is fixed in his early years."

Maria Montessori  
from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 9

The adult's "reality", as consciously conceived, emanates from a pattern of prejudicial assumption about life and being acquired during early childhood and fixedly incorporated into one's "personality" since about the age of six. Teachers and parents therefore unconsciously conceptualize "education" and "teaching" according to one's own prejudicial assumptions and experiences about life as a child. Such assumptions are readily generalized to all children so that the ordinary teacher adopts a similar repressive, manipulative role to that of one's own parents in circumstances with all children. The cycle of prejudice and erroneous assumption in this regard is therefore unconsciously communicated to the next generation as a matter of course.

### The Receptive Being

"The commonest prejudice in ordinary education is that everything can be accomplished by talking . . . or by holding one's self up as a model to be imitated . . . The child is usually considered a receptive being instead of an active being."

Maria Montessori  
from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 254

Prejudice in traditional education is characterized by a view of the child as "receptive"; i.e., sort of "empty". The adult's almighty "teaching" of various skills and values is therefore the primary activity of such an "education". Conventional "teaching", with the adult as the active agent for the child's learning, well expresses the common prejudice in education of the adult serving as the "teacher"; i.e., the adult as the creative source of all the child's learning and improvement.

### The "Teacher"

"A prejudice has found its way into the adult—the notion that the life of the child can be changed or improved only through teaching. This prejudice impedes the understanding of the fact that the child constructs himself, that he has a teacher within himself."

Maria Montessori  
from *The Formation of Man*, p. 62

The adult's typical "self-image" as "teacher" for children assumes to itself a certain self-righteous pride that one's "teaching" is the child's primary source of well-being and betterment. The "teacher within" the child is generally disregarded in one's assumption of "god-like" authority and responsibility for everything pertaining to the child's development. The typical teacher thus assumes the role of a sort of benevolent dictator.

Cont'd on Page 4, Col. 1

## Alexander Graham Bell Communicates for Montessori

**Alexander Graham Bell**, renowned inventor of the telephone, is also known in history for his significant contribution and early communication of Montessori to the American public. Devoted to innovation and discovery in all fields of science. Bell was particularly instrumental in establishing the first Montessori schools in Canada and the United States.

In 1912, Bell's grandchildren and other neighborhood children participated in what was termed a "Children's Laboratory" in the Bell's summer home in Nova Scotia, Canada—reported to be the first Montessori environment in Canada. So impressed was Mrs. Bell by the children's progress in such a "normalizing" environment that she sponsored **Anne F. George**, the foremost disciple of Montessori in America at that time, to form a full-fledged Montessori school at the Bell's Washington, D.C. home during the 1912-13 school year.

The Bell's were further actively involved in the formation of an association to disseminate information and to organize support in America on behalf of Montessori education. In his book, "Alexander Graham Bell and the Conquest of Solitude" (*Little, Brown and Co., Boston, MA, 1972, P. 462*), **Robert Bruce** notes that "in the spring of 1913 a group of Washington parents organized the Montessori Educational Association (MEA) and unanimously elected Mrs. Bell president. . . By the spring of 1915 the Montessori Educational Association was publishing a magazine and had elected Bell its president."

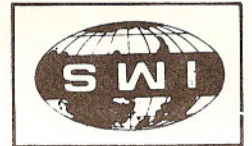
However, such enthusiastic initial efforts all but disappeared by 1919 due to the intervention of World War I and failures of communication between the MEA and Dr. Montessori. **Rita Kramer** in her book "Maria Montessori" (*G.A. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1977, p. 208*) reports that Bell's son-in-law wrote Mrs. Bell urging her to withdraw her support and participation on behalf of Montessori to avoid "unpleasantness" in view of Dr. Montessori's personal "idiosyncracies" and "utter lack of responsibility." Opposition from the traditional educational community in America also arose at that time to finally deter the Bell's tentative initial efforts for "a new education." Such efforts were not to reemerge significantly in America until well after Dr. Montessori's death in 1952.

The contribution of Alexander Graham Bell to Montessori education in America is noteworthy, coming as it does from the inventor of such a useful and impactful device for communication as the telephone. "Communication" itself therefore emerges in history as a critical factor in the progress of the work of creating a "new education." The early failures of such communication in America reveal the depth of attachment to prejudice in adult society concerning the child and its education.

Address correction requested

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Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 2

### Benevolent Dictator

*"The kind of education still in vogue condemns the teacher to be a dictator . . . teachers of the older school hold firmly to irrational rules and have little to guide them but illusion and prejudice."*

**Maria Montessori**

from *Absorbent Mind*, p. 240

Bound within one's own prejudicial view of the child's nature as "weak", "docile", "whimsical" or merely "empty", the typical teacher is virtually compelled to unconsciously play out the role of "benevolent dictator"; i.e., however sweetly, to impose a "reality" on the child consistent with the common beliefs and customs of adult society as communicated essentially through one's own parents from early childhood. By contrast, Montessori teaching necessarily implicates a growing awareness of those various unconscious inner prejudices about the child which so compel tyrannical impositions through one's automatic reactive behavior. Such awareness enables a natural disengagement from the role of "benevolent dictator" and conscious restraint of its detrimental effects through "teaching". Preparation for Montessori teaching is thus a continuous process of discovery of unknown error within the teacher in one's association and work with children.

### Unknown Error

*"The adult must find within himself the still unknown error that prevents him from seeing the child as he is. If such a preparation is not made. . . he can go no further."*

**Maria Montessori**

from *Secret of Childhood*, p. 15

Awareness of specific inner prejudices about the child results in a gradual correction of detrimental behavior which automatically emanates from such prejudices.

One's correction of such detrimental behavior invariably results in a more non-teaching, observant adult demeanor; i.e., behavior consistent with that which enables the emergence of the child's true "normalized" nature.

### Revealing the Child

*"The revelations of the child are not at all so difficult to obtain, the real difficulty lies in the adult's old prejudices concerning him."*

**Maria Montessori**

from *The Formation of Man*, p. 22

The child's revelation of its own true nature emerges spontaneously of itself in a psychic space which is absent the effects of prejudicial impositions from the adult. Montessori teaching is thus seen as more an "inner preparation" and "non-teaching" than it is the conventional manipulation of external effects commonly associated with traditional education. One's discovery of commitment to the three "Montessori" principles; i.e., (1) "observation"; (2) "individual liberty"; and (3) "preparation of the environment", shows that a complete mastery of Montessori teaching does indeed entail a natural process of restraining one's outer expression of prejudices regarding the child and its education.

## The Children's Place

Cont'd. from Page 1, Col. 1

regular participation in the Annual Katy Rodeo Parade. The children actively participate in the work of creating and building the school floats for the parade. In 1984, the Children's Place entry in the Rodeo won first place.

For further information, contact: Judy Crockett, The Children's Place, 5024 East 5th St., Katy, Texas 77449, Tel. (713) 391-2909.

## Positions & Placements

**Montessori Teacher:** Head Teacher Montessori Pre-school. Salary: \$1000.00 per month. Requirements: Must have one year Montessori Training; must have one year Montessori experience working with children; must have Montessori Certification. Apply at Texas Employment Commission, El Paso, Texas or send Resume to Texas Employment Commission, Texas Employment Commission Building, Austin, Texas 78778. J.O. #3943068. "Ad Paid by an Equal Employment Opportunity Employer".

## Letters to IMS

Cont'd. from Page 3, Col. 1

December 28, 1984

Dear Lee,

I have read your response to my first lesson several times and get more out of it with each reading. I really appreciate the depth of detail in your response . . . I have already become less directly involved with fights between my children, and I already see a reduction in the number of these fights. . .

There is certainly a lot of meat in your response, which I am just beginning to digest.

Looking forward to your next communication.

Sincerely,

Ellen Contois

Wentworth, New Hampshire

**Ed. Note:** Ellen Contois is a student in the Society's independent study course. Her comments relate to her experience and results concerning the first lesson of the 22-lesson course conducted entirely through mail correspondence.

### REMINDER

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